English Ivy

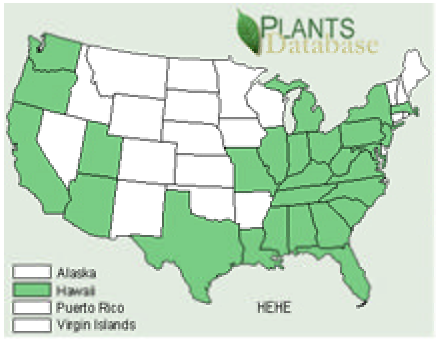
Hedera helix L.

NATIVE RANGE: Europe, western Asia, and northern Africa

DESCRIPTION: English ivy is an evergreen climbing vine in the ginseng family (Araliaceae). Vines attach to the bark of trees, brickwork, and other surfaces by way of numerous, small root like structures, exuding glue like substance. 3-lobed heart-shaped leaves are dark green, waxy, somewhat leathery, and arranged alternately along the stem. Spring maturing black fruit with a fleshy outer covering encloses stone-like seeds.

NOTE: Compounds in English ivy are somewhat toxic and include glycosides that cause vomiting, diarrhea, nervous conditions & dermatitis in sensitive individuals.

ECOLOGICAL THREAT: English ivy is an aggressive invader that threatens all vegetation levels of forested and open areas, growing along the ground as well as into the forest canopy. Vines climbing up tree trunks spread out and surround branches and twigs, preventing most of the sunlight from reaching the leaves of the host tree. Loss of host tree vigor, evident within a few years, is followed by death a few years later.



DISTRIBUTION IN THE UNITED STATES: English ivy occurs in at least 26 states and the District of Columbia, where it is one of the most abundant and widespread invasive plants.

HABITAT IN THE UNITED STATES: English ivy infests woodlands, forest edges, fields, hedgerows, coastal areas, salt marsh edges, and other upland areas, especially where some soil moisture is present.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT APPROACHES: Several effective methods of control are available for English ivy, including chemical and non-chemical, depending on the extent of the infestation, the amount of native vegetation on-site, and available time and labor.

- **Manual and Mechanical.** Vines growing as groundcover can be pulled up by hand, with some difficulty, and left on-site or bagged and disposed of as trash.
- **Chemical.** The systemic herbicide triclopyr (e.g., Garlon) is absorbed into plant tissues and carried to the roots, effectively killing the entire plant in place.
- **Biological control.** There are no biological controls currently available for English ivy.